Q TOWER
Baltimore & Ohio Railroad
E side of B&O Railroad, S of Hyndman
Hyndman vicinity
Bedford County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-359

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Q TOWER
Baltimore & Ohio Railroad
HAER No. PA-359

Location:	E side of B&O Railroad, S of Hyndman Hyndman (vic.) Bedford County Pennsylvania
Date of Construction:	ca. 1890s
Present Owner:	CSX
Present Use:	Railroad Signal and Switching Tower
Significance:	Located at the foot of a 20-mile grade to the summit of the Alleghenies, Q Tower is the first interlocking tower on the B&O's Pittsburgh Division out of Cumberland, Maryland. A small crew of men originally operated the interlocking signaling and switching equipment. This signaling and switching system was termed interlocking because neither function could work independently of the other. Signals for trains to stop or proceed were activated according to the position of the track switches, which were set by tower crews; each tower crew coordinated train traffic along their respective lines. Q Tower is one of the few signal towers that retains its early interlocking equipment.
Historian:	Scott C. Brown, 1991
Project Information:	The results of the study of Bedford County were published in 1994: Kim E. Wallace (ed), Bedford County and Fulton County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service). The contents of the publication were transmitted to the Library of Congress as individual reports. Research notes, field photos and copies of historic photos collected during the project were transmitted to the AIHP Collection, Special Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's signal and switching station at Hyndman is called the Q Tower. It is a square, two-story frame building with a shallow pyramid roof. The building is covered with aluminum siding and has a metal exterior stairway to the second floor above the first-floor entrance on the south elevation. Fenestration of the building has been significantly altered with windows either covered or reduced in size. A 1946 photograph shows broad windows on the second floor for visibility up and down the track. An exterior stairway with wood bannisters rose to a landing, then turned along the side of the building to the second floor. The building had clapboard siding and a slightly projecting skirt of fishscale shingles around the bottom of the second-floor level.

The Q Tower is the first interlocking tower on the B&O's Pittsburgh Division out of Cumberland, Maryland. It is located at the foot of the 20-mile grade to the summit of the Allegheny Mountains at Sand Patch, Somerset County. The tower controls switches, signals, and derails within its designated track jurisdiction. Technology for mechanically "interlocking" operation of track switches and signals for safer train movement was introduced in the United States in the 1870s. Signals to stop or proceed are activated only when the track switches are in the correct and locked position. The track switches at Hyndman were manufactured by the General Railway Signal Company of Rochester, New York. Early hand-controlled floor levers, originally called "armstrong levers" because of the strength needed to operate them, are located in the second-floor control room. Hydraulic switching rods constitute what is known as a pipe-connected mechanical switching interlocking, running from the tower alongside the tracks to the two double crossovers in the track. The now-outdated switching system is kept in working order through constant maintenance.

Trains once encountered two additional towers--"GR" and "FO"--on the way up the mountain, but these were made obsolete through increasing automation. Traffic is controlled at the top of Sand Patch grade by the "SA" tower at the summit. The "Q" and "SA" towers remain in operation in 1991, but their survival is unlikely. In computerized centralized traffic control systems, towers are usually replaced with small signal cabinets with electrical switches.

Sources

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